

Company: South West Genetics

1. Enterprise description and goals:

Our farm consists of 65% commercial crossbred ewes for lamb production, 20% self replacing Merino flock and 15% stud stock of Merino's, Coopworths, and texels. Goals include increasing merino growth and fertility, producing lambs 20kgs+, high yielding, fat score 3, and working direct to processors.

2. Labour efficiency and profitability

Labour efficiency and profitability in our enterprise is driven by using our own skills of use of genetic profit drivers like kilograms of lamb and wool per hectare, use of laneways for stock work and direct drilling for pasture and fodder establishment.

Within the stud industry we performance record all studs and benchmark ourselves against others from all over Australia. Pushing fertility, growth, muscle, worm resistance and fleece traits.

We are at 4000 DSE per labour unit but we have off farm jobs as accredited ultrasound operators for Sheep Genetics in Australia.

The whole farm is set up using laneways making stock movement very easy and stress free. Selection for low Worm egg counts is reducing the reliance on drenching giving reduced expenses and time and slowing the possible onset of resistance.

Selection for Merino sheep with four milking teats has seen an increase of 8% increase in lambing percentage and a 5% increase in weaning weights. Also identified is bare brech ewes which will be selected to find heritability and fleece information variations from their progeny.

Dealing direct with lamb processors and finishers has helped develop a better direction for the enterprise and selling wool direct has saved over 50c/kg.

3. Production systems:

The stud is using lambplan to identify animals that are performing to a higher level.

Using TGRM (Total genetic resource management) as a mating program to allow the stud increase productivity in areas that would most benefit our and clients profitability, and minimise inbreeding.

Laneways help for easy movement of stock to central yards and sheds. A raised board shearing shed for better wool handling and preparation.

Fencing off the creek and other swamp and low production areas and concentrate on higher return areas. Natural areas are left with the absence of stock pressure, natural and native species are returning creek banks have stabilised

Choosing different grass species to spread the production and performance of pastures into different and more critical times. This includes lucerne and more annual grasses.

We continue to participate in courses for developing skills in stock, pasture, and soil management and inbreeding.

These include Bestwool/ Bestlamb groups that help in decision making for the farm.

4. Enterprise development:

Selling all wool away from the Auction system.

For Four and a half years we supplied lamb into a local butcher shop on a weekly basis, continuously throughout the year. This was a great learning experience with feedback coming all the time. This helped us make decisions on production and genetic focus.

The main Property is now a MN3 property and we vaccinate to eliminate any other risks.

With our genetic background, we have a good link with other stud breeders and our commercial breeders. Helping them make decisions for their future direction. We have used clients lambs to fill production gaps in our lamb supply.

We have been involved with many local lamb trials and also national through the MLA.

With our Scanning work for the Sheep Genetics, we travel through all eastern state accessing stud and commercial sheep and lambs seeing a wide environmental and genetic variation. We have been able to source some of the best genetics around for our own stud and use other forms of genetic assessment such as DNA.

5. Environmental impacts and benefits:

We have fenced and excluded stock from our creek line and also some natural swamps. These have been revegetated using local species and are becoming very valuable.

We are apart of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment management Authority and still involved with the landcare group of groups (Watershed 2000).

Using the whole farm mapping course we have found areas of land that can be made better and where we need more trees

6. Your farming life:

I am currently the President of the South West texel breeders at the age of 30.

With a young family the farm is ideal for the kids to grow up understanding their enviroment and how production is effected.

I am able to work and have time for the family when it is necessary.

I work away from home which I am able to refresh my ideas and see where I can improve. Getting off the farm with the family can become hard (Boy 2.5yrs, girl 8weeks) but we make time and still play some sport in the community.

7. Your international study tour:

I would love to see New Zealand and how they use rotational grazing to maximise pasture performance and stock health and performance. How they are handaling pressure from groups like PETA. If wool marketing can be improved and built links between the two countries with our genetic evaluation systems.